

White House Conference on Aging Solutions Forum

March 31, 2005

CRIS Senior Center

Danville, Illinois

Welcome and Introductions

Frank Young, Vermilion County State's Attorney welcomed the 85 attendees to WHCOA Solutions Forum. He recognized and thanked the co-sponsors including:

CRIS Senior Services,

Vermilion County State's Attorney, and

East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging.

Amy Henkelman, CEO of CRIS Senior Services announced the theme of the WHCOA Forum: "Preparing Vermilion County Citizens for "Aging in Place." She announced that the Forum was designated by the national WHCOA Office as an official WHCOA event. She introduced the keynote speaker Mike O'Donnell, Executive Director of the East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging.

Keynote Address

Mike O'Donnell presented the keynote address on the theme: "Building a Community for Long Term Living." A copy of the keynote address is attached to this report.

Focus Groups

The attendees proceeded to their assigned Focus Groups to address the following issues:

Blue Group: Preventing Crime Against Seniors. Facilitator: Frank Young, Vermilion County State's Attorney

Green Group: Housing and Community Services. Facilitator: Amy Henkelman, CEO, CRIS Senior Services

Red Group: Health Care. Facilitator: Chad Hays, Executive Director, Provena USMC Foundation

Process

The facilitators of each group instructed their group participants to identify problems and vote to select their top five problems using a nominal group process technique. Each group was instructed to identify solutions and vote to select their top three solutions for each problem. The Focus Groups reported their solutions in plenary session. The following is a summary of their reports:

Preventing Crime Against Seniors

Problem #1: Financial Exploitation

Solutions:

1. Focus on younger people as well as older adults
2. Provide preventative education where seniors go for financial information
3. Increase compliance with the reporting of financial exploitation

Problem #2: Older Adults with diminished capacity to make decisions

Solutions:

1. Increase the availability of money management assistance
2. Provide outreach and education to children of aging parents
3. Increase the availability of affordable assisted living facilities

Problem #3: Get older adults to open up about abuse.

Solutions:

1. Talk with people who have regular contact with seniors, including: hair dressers, postal carriers, persons delivering meals, etc.
2. Encourage law enforcement officers to speak out publicly about elder abuse
3. Encourage former victims to speak out publicly about elder abuse to help others

Problem: #4: Lack of public awareness about services available.

Solutions:

1. Use local media to inform the public about elder abuse and services available
2. Use local cable channels to promote elder abuse services
3. Use bill board advertising to get the message out to parents of aging parents

Housing and Community Resources

Problem: #1: The need to educate seniors, families and health care providers about available services

Solutions:

1. Establish a comprehensive clearinghouse to get information out to seniors and help them understand.
2. Establish a marketing task force to identify and test the most effective ways to reach and inform seniors, family caregivers and medical providers, e.g., home visits, stuffers in water bills, public service announcements in movie theaters, etc.
3. Establish an emergency management system including lists of individuals using oxygen, and a geographic information system to prioritize services.

Problem #2: The need to increase accessibility of medical transportation for seniors in rural areas.

Solutions:

1. Increase funding
2. Increase volunteers
3. Increase coordination among providers of transportation and health care providers
4. Establish a North-South hub
5. Acquire smaller, more efficient vehicles

Problem #3: Inadequate funding for home health care.

Solutions:

1. Increase funding under Medicare and the Older Americans Act
2. Shift dollars into prevention
3. Advise lawmakers about performance measures

Problem #4: Health hazards impacting seniors who cannot maintain their homes.

Solutions:

1. Coordinate volunteers to install grab bars and ramps.
2. Assess the functional needs and financial capacity of seniors to maintain their homes.
3. Provide services to low-income seniors and recommend reputable service providers.

Problem #5: How to pay for rising costs of meeting basic needs.

Solutions:

1. Education
2. Volunteers to weatherize homes
3. Refer seniors needing home weatherization to the East Central Illinois Community Action Agency.

Health Care

Problem #1: Access to affordable prescription medications.

Solutions:

1. Greater cost containment; restrict price increases.
2. Establish a local coalition to educate and assist Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries.
3. Better education about where to go to get pharmaceutical assistance.
4. Better regulatory control related to mail-order pharmaceutical industry.
5. Health care providers need to be more proactive in helping seniors obtain affordable medications.

Problem #2: Lack of Information and Referral Resources.

Solutions:

1. Reinvest in a one-stop I&R facility
2. Ensure that callers have contact with a real person
3. Provide information about available supportive services and community activities
4. Name (brand) and marketing needs to be well researched.
5. Better coordination of untapped resources
6. Better communication through caregivers
7. Coordinate marketing toward seniors

Problem #3: Mental Health Issues

Solutions:

1. Reduce stigma through the efforts of the Vermilion County Mental Health & Aging Coalition
2. Integrate primary health care and mental health care
3. Increase screening of older adults for substance abuse and mental health problems
4. Restore a gero-psychiatric unit in Danville

Problem #4: Declining Resources to Support Services

Solutions:

1. Look at funding from a continuum of care perspective, i.e., home and community-based services to long term care facilities.
2. Rebalance the long term care system in Illinois through the implementation of the Older Adults Services Act (Public Act 93-1031), a.k.a. Senate Bill 2880.
3. Create partnerships between agencies to avoid duplication of services.

Problem #5: Lack of Physicians

Solutions:

1. Tort reform.
2. Encourage eligible seniors and their families to use the services provided by *Aunt Martha's* Vermilion County Health Center, which is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC).
[The Vermilion County Health Center celebrated its open house at 2:00 p.m., March 31, 2005 (following the WHCOA Forum) at its new facility located at 614 N. Gilbert Street in Danville.]
3. Put pressure on legislators to address the need for an adequate supply of medical professionals in medically underserved areas of the State.
4. Organizations representing medical professionals should be held accountable for facilitating change.

The ECIAAA distributed evaluation forms to the attendees.

Frank Young thanked the attendees for their participation.

Mike O'Donnell announced that a summary report of the proceedings would be submitted to the WHCOA Office in thirty days. Copies of the report will be sent to all attendees.

The WHCOA Forum was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.